



## Iowa History in the U.S. Capitol

**Q:** A friend of mine who recently visited Washington, D.C. mentioned that each state gets to send two statues of prominent figures to the Capitol. Who came up with this idea and what two statues has Iowa sent?

**A:** In 1857, the Congress completed a renovation that added its prominent cast iron dome and two additional wings that contained new chambers for the House and Senate. When the House moved to its new chamber there was some debate over how to best use the space it vacated.

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**There's a great deal more of Iowa and America's history to be discovered by visiting Washington.**

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In 1864, Congress designated the old House of Representatives chamber as 'National Statuary Hall.' Each state was invited to provide up to two statues to be displayed in the Hall "of deceased persons who have been citizens thereof, and illustrious for their historic renown or for distinguished civic or military services such as each State may deem to be worthy of this national commemoration..."

Iowa chose to send statues of James Harlan and Samuel Kirkwood. Harlan and Kirkwood were both educators, lawyers, and later, United States Senators. Both men served as U.S. Secretary of the Interior. In fact, Kirkwood succeeded Harlan as both U.S. Senator and Interior Secretary. Additionally, both statues were created by prominent female sculptors, Nellie Walker and Vinnie Ream respectively.

James Harlan was born in Clark County, Illinois, on August 26, 1820. He served as president of Iowa Wesleyan University, first from 1853 to 1855 and again from 1869 to 1870. He also served in the U.S. Senate during the Civil War, promoting homesteader rights, railroad construction, and land grant colleges. Harlan was also a close friend to President Lincoln and his daughter married Lincoln's son, Robert Todd Lincoln.

Samuel Kirkwood was born on December 20, 1813. He is best remembered as governor of Iowa during the Civil War. Kirkwood declined a nomination to be minister to Denmark in order to run for the Senate. He completed Harlan's term when Harlan became Secretary of the Interior. Kirkwood was later appointed to the same position before unsuccessfully running for the presidency in 1886.

You can read more about Harlan, Kirkwood and Statuary Hall by visiting the Architect of the Capitol's Web site at [http://www.aoc.gov/cc/art/nsh/nsh\\_states.htm](http://www.aoc.gov/cc/art/nsh/nsh_states.htm). Better yet, you can come to Washington, D.C., and see their statues for yourself.

If you're interested in visiting Washington and would like more information, call 202-224-3254, or visit my Web site at <http://harkin.senate.gov>. Clicking on 'Visiting Washington,' will give you information about Capitol tours and my weekly constituent breakfasts for visiting Iowans. There's a great deal more of Iowa and America's history to be discovered by visiting Washington.